Claims:

1.   A method for transporting frame based packet data into a synchronous transmission communications network, said method comprising the steps of:

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encoding at least one packet data frame with a code which designates a boundary of said frame;

inputting said encoded packet data frame into a synchronous data channel.

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2.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said code is recognizable by a synchronous communications protocol as designating a boundary of a said data frame.

15   3.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of encoding at least one packet data frame comprises:

appending a fixed pointer describing a position of a said boundary within a data stream containing said packet data frame, said fixed pointer appended into

20   said synchronous digital channel.

4.   The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein a said fixed pointer comprises a pointer designating an end of said packet data frame.

25   5.   The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said fixed pointer comprises a pointer designating a start of said packet data frame.

6.   The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said pointer designates a position of a said boundary within a synchronous virtual container.

7.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of encoding at least one packet data frame comprises:

5   partitioning said packet data frame into a plurality of bytes;

for each byte appending an extra bit indicating that said corresponding respective byte comprises part of said packet data frame; and

10   for a last byte of said packet data frame, appending an extra bit indicating that said byte constitutes a last byte of said data frame.

8.   The method as claimed in step 1, wherein said step of encoding at least one packet data frame comprises applying a consistent overhead byte

15   stuffing algorithm to said data frame.

9.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of encoding at least one packet data frame comprises:

20   applying a coding algorithm to said packet data frame which identifies a boundary of said data frame by appending a fixed number of bits to said data frame, irrespective of a size of said data frame.

10.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of encoding

25   at least one packet data frame comprises:

applying a coding algorithm to said data frame which identifies a boundary of said data frame by appending a fixed number of bits to said data frame, irrespective of a data content of said data frame.